United Nations A/52/PV.61

General Assembly
Fifty-second Session

Official Records

61st plenary meeting
Wednesday, 3 December 1997, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko . . . . . (Ukraine)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Campbell (Ireland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 37 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/52/467, A/52/581)

Draft resolutions (A/52/L.54, L.55, L.62)

Amendments (A/52/L.63)

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Despite the many crises and problems in the international arena today, some of which have taken a dangerous turn towards escalation, the issue of peace and stability in the Middle East remains high on the list of international concerns. This most urgent question has preoccupied the international community for 50 years now, forcing it to redouble its efforts to find ways and means to lead the peace process to success and to eliminate the many Israeli obstacles that have halted it. Naturally, such international concern did not arise by chance or in a vacuum. It was dictated by many political considerations, foremost among which is the need to contain the explosive situation created by the extremist approach taken by the current Government of Netanyahu, particularly after it became clear that if that Government were to continue on its current path the result would be more frustration, violence and chaos in the Middle East. That, in turn, would have grave repercussions and ripple effects, threatening the interests of many States and peoples and endangering the security and stability of the region and the world, with unforeseeable results.

It is with good reason that the question most insistently repeated in this Assembly these days has been that of who is responsible for the tragedies, for the scourge that is currently afflicting the Middle East. What is the reason for the almost irreversible deterioration and near collapse of the situation? Naturally, such a question cannot be separated from another one related to the peace process: the question of where that process is today.

No one can claim that the process is still alive, that it has any pulse whatsoever to indicate that it is indeed moving towards the established objective of a just and comprehensive peace in the region. Taking a few steps backward, one would find that this process, now halted by the Netanyahu Government, was, only six years ago, a source of hope for the peoples of the region and for all those who love and cherish peace in the world.

The peace process launched in Madrid in 1991 was based on the clear criteria of, first and foremost, the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), and the principle of land for peace. No one imagined that a just and comprehensive peace could be achieved free of cost or without difficulties. For that reason, the Arab leaders, at

97-86647 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

the Cairo Summit, made peace a strategic choice. However, that peace is now dying at the hands of the intransigent Government of Israel.

Everyone knows that the peace talks on the Syrian track continued for five years and then reached the point at which Israel made a commitment to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. The Netanyahu Government turned its back on that commitment, denying it just as it had denied all the undertakings and commitments it had entered into during the peace process. What Netanyahu wanted was to shirk any and all prices to be paid by Israel for peace. He sang a new tune, calling for new talks based on no agreed framework or basis, including those established in Madrid. He does not want to recognize the existence of occupied Arab land which must be returned to its original owners, and indeed he has now begun to urge the holding of what he calls talks without preconditions.

In his opinion, such preconditions are represented by the Arab countries' insistence on the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Madrid terms of reference. What Netanyahu proposes is rejected in its entirety not only by the Arabs but indeed by anyone who respects the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. Is insisting on the principles of international law and the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions a precondition?

The fundamental problem in our region, and what that region experiences every day in terms of tension, complications and turbulence, as well as the region's potential for conflagration and grave repercussions, is the problem of continued occupation by Israel of Arab land, the usurpation of the rights of Arabs and the practice of injustice and oppression, as well as Israel's planned regional expansion and hegemony and its refusal to recognize the principles of international legitimacy, foremost among which are the principles of international law and of the United Nations Charter regarding the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the land of others by force or aggression.

A brief examination of the proposals of the current leader of the Israeli Government shows that they run counter to all the principles of international legitimacy. In brief, what the Israeli Government wants is to bargain with the Arabs on something it does not own, something to which it has no right and something that it has no basis to claim under the conventions and principles of international legitimacy.

It is truly strange that there is no appropriate or adequate response to the challenges of Netanyahu and his attempts to undermine the efforts by the United States of America, which provided the peace initiative well-known and internationally agreed foundations. We now see him shirking his commitments to those foundations and ignoring the provisions of the United Nations Charter, the principles of international law and the resolutions of international legitimacy. We can honestly say that we find no justification for the international community to remain unconcerned over the non-implementation of the very principles and foundations on which the peace process was built, which were supported by the entire international community.

We believe that there is no middle ground between good and evil, between those who respect and those who do not respect legality. The Arabs are not calling on the American sponsor to take their side. But they call on the American Administration to stand by the foundations they laid, which were agreed upon and regarding which assurances were provided to the parties to the peace process. The Arabs call upon the sponsors of the peace process, and specifically the American sponsor, to stand by the basis from which it was launched. We believe that without influence being brought to bear on the party responsible for the halt in the peace process and its deterioration, namely, the current Israeli Administration, the peace process cannot continue and cannot achieve the results we all seek.

No one can lay the blame or responsibility on the Arab sides which accepted the peace process, cooperated in it and went to Madrid to propel it. As for Syria, it is prepared at any time to resume the talks from the point where they were halted. However, no one can acquit the Netanyahu Government of its responsibility for all the upheavals in the region today. Nor can one forget the hopeful picture of the peace process before Netanyahu, compared to the current situation which is full of tension and the dangers of conflagration which exist at every moment. It has become important to craft a united, international position, a position of pressure that does not stop merely at the transmission of letters and the giving of advice. All available means of pressuring Israel must be brought to bear to compel it to respect the will for peace. The Israeli Government must be forced to put an end to its reckless policy that is threatening the region at all times with more war, more bloodshed and the possible loss of the chance for peace which is available now. Consequently, it will be difficult for the region to witness a state of peace or stability.

Despite all that, Syria welcomes international efforts and wishes to do whatever it can to restore credibility to the peace process and to open the door to the establishment of pillars for a just and comprehensive solution that gives everyone their due. Syria truly, genuinely wishes peace. It has repeatedly declared that peace is its strategic objective. However, it must be clear that Syria will not accept any bargaining on rights or on concession of any territory. When Syria calls for the resumption of talks from the point where they were stopped, and on the basis of a clear Israeli commitment to withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, it will do so because it wants a stable and solid peace that puts an end to injustice and occupation and ensures for the region a life of security and stability far removed from the atmosphere of threats and aggression.

Mr. Bhatti (Pakistan): Six years ago, in October 1991, the international community breathed a sigh of relief when a Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened in Madrid. A ray of hope and optimism filled the imagination of people around the world as prospects for a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict looked brighter. It was a welcome development, as peace in the Middle East seemed an achievable goal after a protracted bloody conflict in the region. We watched this process with deep interest and hope. The international community as a whole backed the peace process and impressed upon the parties the need to seek a peaceful and durable solution to the problem on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which envisaged the formula of land for peace in the Middle East.

Unfortunately, the initial euphoria soon gave way to uncertainty and gloom. The whole process suffered a serious setback because Israel, the occupying Power, declined to accept the principle of land for peace as a basis for a comprehensive solution to the problem. In flagrant violation of the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, Israel also declined to withdraw from the Syrian Golan, which both legally and historically belongs to the Syrian Arab Republic. It also continued to encourage construction of new settlements in the occupied territories. These deplorable practices and policies of Israel disappointed the entire international community. This Israeli intransigence led to the breakdown of the peace process and dialogue on all tracks, particularly on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

Pakistan deplores Israel's intransigence and its refusal to comply with all the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. We firmly believe that Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) provide the only viable and just framework for a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. There should be strict adherence to the principles laid down in these resolutions, which provide the legal basis for building a durable peace in the region. Within the occupied territories, Israel must abide by the principles laid down in the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of non-combatants in times of war.

It would be unfortunate if, at this fateful juncture in history, the Middle East were allowed relapse into a fresh, vicious cycle of violence and chaos. This would pose a renewed threat to international peace and security. We must not allow this to happen. The international community must exert its influence on Israel to ensure that the peace process in the Middle East remains on track. Israel must take the necessary measures forthwith to create a propitious atmosphere for a continued dialogue in the Middle East. These measures should include withdrawal of its forces from occupied Syrian territories to the positions held before 4 June 1967; repealing all administrative measures aimed at annexing the Syrian Golan; revoking all laws and illegal jurisdiction imposed on the occupied Golan, which legally belongs to the Syrian Arab Republic, as stipulated in Security Council resolution 497 (1981); immediately stopping construction of new settlements in occupied territories; and respect for the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of civilian non-combatants.

We are convinced that these measures would facilitate the furthering of the peace process in the Middle East.

The Acting President: Before I give the floor to the next speaker, may I appeal to representatives to ensure that there is a little less noise in the Hall so as to allow the speakers the dignity that they deserve.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The situation in the Middle East, which is under discussion today by the General Assembly, is highly pertinent and requires the international community's most careful attention.

The continuing deadlock in the Arab-Israeli dialogue requires the sponsors of the Middle East peace process, including Russia, to take additional energetic and urgent measures to find ways of unblocking the situation as

rapidly as possible, since it threatens to unleash new violence and bloodshed in this region.

We are prepared to continue to work actively to that end. A significant contribution to the joint efforts aimed at bringing the Arabs and Israelis back to the negotiating table was made by the recent visit to the region by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Russia, Mr. Yevgeny Primakov. The code of peace and security in the Middle East proposed by the Russian Minister in Cairo, as contained in United Nations document A/52/570, is an important initiative aimed at strengthening the climate of trust in the region and at establishing a genuine and lasting peace.

The bases of the Russian approach are the fundamental elements of the peace process: the Madrid formula, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and the principle of land for peace.

Russia supports the speedy resumption of negotiations on all the Arab-Israeli tracks, without exception, in particular the achievement of real progress on the Palestinian-Israeli contacts on the basis of previously achieved agreements and accords. It is particularly important here that the interested parties refrain from any unilateral actions that could anticipate the results of the negotiations.

In this regard, we again call on Israel to cease building new settlements and to begin immediately and fully the practical implementation of the Palestinian-Israeli agreements. In so doing, Israel's security concerns must clearly be taken into account. Obviously, the agreements and accords that have been concluded between the parties to this complex process must be implemented. This of course refers to the provisions of the Interim Agreement and the Hebron Protocol of 15 January 1995 concerning redeployment in the West Bank. The implementation of these accords requires dialogue, goodwill and the support of the international community.

Moreover, there can be no lasting peace in the Middle East without movement on the Syrian-Israeli track, where the basis for further negotiations already exists, or without the achievement of progress on the Lebanese-Israeli settlement on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which is its indispensable international legal basis.

Finding a solution to the question of the Middle East is a shared task. To resolve it, various instruments, the best diplomatic skill and the leading political figures of the world are being deployed. In all this, a special role undoubtedly falls to the United Nations.

Russia, as a co-sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East, intends to continue to work actively to extricate the region from the present prolonged deadlock through a search for mutually acceptable solutions and compromises in the positions of the interested parties.

Ms. Wensley (Australia): It is a cause of deep regret that, even compared with last year, the achievement of peace in the Middle East remains elusive, that the parties are distanced by mistrust and lack of confidence and that the energetic efforts of many to take the process forward appear to be achieving little.

Australia shares the concern, frustration and disappointment of the international community that the people of the Middle East are still being denied the opportunity to live in peace, security and prosperity. The Australian Government's policy on the Middle East is based on long-standing and firmly established principles — a fundamental commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination — acknowledging that the ultimate shape of the Palestinian entity, including the possibility of an independent State, is subject to the final status negotiations between the parties directly involved.

We support strongly those negotiations and the foundations on which they are based: Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace, the Madrid process and the Oslo Declaration of Principles concluded between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1993. We consider that the attainment of a lasting peace requires a comprehensive agreement in which the rights of each of the parties is respected on an equitable basis.

We believe that there is a need for a renewed effort to engage Syria and Lebanon in the negotiating process on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), the sovereignty of each of the parties, guarantees for Israel's security and an outcome regarding the Golan Heights which is acceptable to both sides.

We have all set out our policies on the situation in the Middle East more times than any of us cares to remember. My own direct experience goes back to the General Assembly sessions of 1974 and 1975. We have

assembled here and elsewhere year after year and have all said much the same thing. Some years we have been very pleased to be able to welcome progress made towards a resolution of the situation in the Middle East, but regrettably, this is not one of those years.

Since the important resolution of the situation in Hebron earlier this year, we have had no cause to register satisfaction with developments. As so many speakers have said here today, the negotiations have been at a standstill and even the recent formal resumption of the talks has not produced a glimmer of a substantive result. In addition, we have witnessed terrible acts of terrorism which have shocked the entire international community. Australia has joined the rest of the world in condemning those acts vehemently and unequivocally. We take the opportunity presented once again by today's debate to call on all those involved to work together to eradicate the entire infrastructure of terrorism so that these acts can never be repeated, anywhere.

At this fifty-second session of the General Assembly, we have supported efforts to contribute to this goal, including through the adoption in the Sixth Committee of the convention on terrorist bombings. My Government has also condemned, both publicly and also — and I think it is important to record — more often in direct talks in private, actions which we have considered to have set back the peace process. We have consistently urged both parties to remove and avoid any impediments in the path of the peace process. We repeat here that both parties must refrain from actions which undermine the trust and confidence that all of us know are the essential, vital ingredient for progress to be resumed in the negotiations.

It is in that context particularly that we regard settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories as unhelpful to the achievement of peace and that we urge the Israeli Government to put a stop to that activity now.

It is all very well to make speeches from this rostrum and to exhort others to take action. Here in the United Nations, we all do a lot of that. But Australians are practical people, and so we have worked to translate our strong support for the peace process into practical assistance, particularly in areas where we judge that we have special experience or expertise to offer. We have contributed over $14 million to the implementation of the Oslo process. An Australian non-governmental organization called Australian Legal Resources International, under the guidance of its Chairman, Mr. Marcus Einfeld, is working with the Palestinian Authority to promote the rule of law in the Palestinian territories. Next week, we are sponsoring and making available Australian experts to a workshop in Tiberias, under the auspices of the water-resources working group, to address the crucial issue of water resources in the region. I should also note that we regret that the working group on arms control and regional security, to which we have also contributed Australian expertise, is currently in abeyance.

Finally, we are also demonstrating that practical commitment to bringing about peace in the Middle East by our consistent and continuing contribution to the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai, the commander of which, I note, was until very recently an Australian.

The ongoing suffering of the Iraqi people, a subject of continuing concern to us, is attributable, in Australia's view, to the unwillingness of the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). Completion of UNSCOM's mandate, without harassment or obstruction by Iraq, is an indispensable precondition for the lifting of sanctions. In the meantime, we have welcomed the implementation of Security Council resolutions 986 (1995) and 1111 (1997), which have gone some way towards providing basic necessities for the Iraqi people.

Iraq's recent decision to expel American UNSCOM inspectors was deplored by my Government as a direct and flagrant defiance of Security Council resolutions, of the rule of law and of the international community. Iraq should realize that the international community is unwavering in its insistence that UNSCOM must be allowed, unhindered, to find, to tag and to destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

We urge Iraq to comply fully with the Security Council resolutions and to cooperate with UNSCOM and its Chairman, without conditions, without obstruction and without interference. It is only through this cooperation and compliance that Iraq will be in a position to receive certification, acceptable to the international community, that it is no longer building, testing, storing or hiding the worst kinds of weapons of mass destruction.

We welcome the Security Council's recent strong support for UNSCOM in its efforts fully to carry out its mandate without obstruction or threat.

My Government will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the

objective of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. The achievement of that objective, we believe, would provide a very important basis for the enhancement of regional security.

In addition, we urge all States in the region to ratify the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions. These weapons of mass destruction, which are increasingly the focus of public comment, interest and attention, pose one of the most serious threats to regional and to global security, and they must be countered.

Australia, also, has long held that universal membership of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) would constitute an important achievement both for global security and for security in regions of tension such as that which we are discussing today: the situation in the Middle East. We therefore welcome particularly the fact that the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti and Oman have all acceded recently to the Treaty, bringing us that much closer to the goal of universal membership of the NPT. We reiterate our appeal to Israel, as the only regional State yet to accede to the Treaty, to give the most serious consideration to the security benefits — not only for itself, but for the region — of acceding to the Treaty and of placing its nuclear facilities under international safeguards.

We call also on all other States of the Middle East which have not yet negotiated full-scope safeguards agreements with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to proceed to do so without delay and, furthermore, to conclude protocols to their existing bilateral safeguards agreements which are based on the IAEA's new Model Additional Protocol for strengthened nuclear safeguards.

We are pleased that the most recently concluded arms control instrument, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, has been signed by a significant number of Middle East States and, indeed, ratified by one. We encourage all other regional States to follow suit.

Australia also urges Middle East States to contribute to the search for a lasting and comprehensive solution to the humanitarian and economic crisis brought about by anti-personnel landmines. For those who are not yet in a position to sign the Ottawa landmines-ban treaty, we urge a cooperative approach to addressing this issue in the 1998 session of the Conference on Disarmament.

Australia considers that the United Nations does have an important role to play in contributing to the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. However, Australia does not consider that the meetings of the emergency special session this year have actually been particularly helpful in taking the peace process forward. I reiterate that we understand and appreciate the sense of frustration which has given rise to these meetings, and we have made clear on every possible occasion that we support the principles on which the resolutions are based. But we hope that the emergency special session will not need to be resumed. If that is to happen, we need clear, urgent and tangible results from the direct negotiations. Everyone involved needs to believe that the process is delivering to them, or is going to deliver to them, dividends from the negotiations. So we again urge the parties to come to the negotiating table with the political will and the intention to move forward so that, when we next address this issue at the United Nations — as we inevitably will — we may once again be in a position to welcome progress.

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The question of the Middle East, at the heart of which is the Palestinian question, is one of the important perennial items on the agenda of our Organization. We had hoped — indeed, we had been convinced — that new achievements would emerge on the road to peace and that we would move towards peace in the years following the launching of the peace process six years ago in Madrid.

Today, witnessing stagnation in the negotiations and backsliding in the peace process, we cannot fail to express our deep concern. In this connection, we sincerely wish to draw attention to the dangers to peace in the entire region as a result of the stagnation of the peace process. Nevertheless, this will not weaken our faith in peace, nor will it affect our resolute commitment to work towards peace, regardless of the obstacles and difficulties we may encounter.

In this regard, we would like to underscore the attachment of the other parties to the peace process and Israel's stubborn insistence on taking positions intended to block the initiatives made in favour of peace.

The delegation of Jordan, participating in the discussion on this agenda item this year as it has done in previous years, can only reaffirm what has already been said. The events of the last year have only served to reaffirm the soundness of our message to the Assembly. We can only reiterate our faith in the fundamental role

played by the United Nations in the peace process and in fulfilling its responsibilities in this matter. It is our duty today to strengthen that role and underscore its responsibility to support the efforts made by the two sponsors of the peace process and the other parties concerned and to step up the initiatives to extricate the peace process from its paralysing impasse.

The United Nations is the essential forum of international legitimacy. It is the United Nations that currently adopts decisive resolutions concerning international disagreements and disputes. It is the United Nations that demands that certain Member States yield to the will of the international community and abide, with strength and determination, by the resolutions adopted. The Organization, after all, is the universal conscience of the peoples of the world. Most resolutions are formulated and adopted within its framework, in which are enshrined the principles, provisions and elements that form the basis for the settlement of the question of the Middle East and of Palestine.

Allow me here to refer to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which constitutes the very foundation of the process that is under way. It was under this resolution that the peace process was launched in 1967. Were its letter and spirit to be implemented at all levels, the Palestinian people would be enabled to exercise their inalienable national and political rights, and the Israeli forces would withdraw from all the territories occupied since 1967. Thus would peace finally come to the region.

The question of the Middle East and the peace process in that region are my Government's primary concern, and Jordan's contribution in this area has been acknowledged since 1948. Jordan has been pursuing in its foreign relations a policy based on the spirit and the letter of the Charter of the United Nations, because it is convinced of the need peacefully to settle all disputes, regardless of the circumstances surrounding them. As soon as the first indications appeared that the process of settling the Middle East conflict was making headway, Jordan hastened to join in working for the success of that historic initiative, which was launched with determination at Madrid. We did so with the same realistic and positive attitude with which we had approached all the previous initiatives taken during those long years of conflict, with the goal of achieving a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict in accordance with the norms of justice, legitimacy, United Nations resolutions and international law.

The peace we seek is just, lasting and comprehensive. That same concept has been expressed by most of the parties directly concerned with the Middle East conflict. Our commitment to achieve peace is a strategic one — a principled commitment based on our conviction that peace is a necessity for all States and peoples of the region, and an imperative need for each of the countries of the region. The achievement of that peace could radically transform the history of the region and give rise to new prospects for peace, security and peaceful coexistence for the region's inhabitants. It could also open the way for the Arab and Israeli peoples to begin living under normal conditions, which they have not been able to do for six decades.

Based on our commitment to establish that peace, in 1994 we signed a peace agreement with Israel that put the process back on track, opening a new chapter in the history of good-neighbourliness and affirming the principles and the basis underlying the cooperation and the relations between the two countries in various areas. Jordan has opened the gates of peace unconditionally and without restrictions, and has done so without diminishing the importance of any of the elements required for normalization of the relations between the two States. Our goal is for the Israeli-Jordanian peace to serve as an example to other countries — an example of our commitment to respect, implement in letter and in spirit, and transform into reality the agreements entered into. We want our Israeli neighbours to know that we do not believe that peace consists merely of the signing of a document as a goal in itself. It is not a way of sanctioning the causes of war or of consolidating gains; it is a reality, a practice and a form of cooperation based on principles of mutual respect and on scrupulous and responsible respect for commitments entered into.

That agreement complemented the initiatives taken by the parties to the negotiations and by the international community to move the peace process forward, in particular since it came in the wake of the achievement of peace with Egypt and of the significant progress made in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with the signing of the Oslo accords and subsequent agreements.

We had strongly hoped that progress would also be made in the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations with a view to achieving a comprehensive settlement of the question and thus moving on to the development and economic reconstruction of the region. Unfortunately, this has not happened yet.

For these reasons, today we must in an objective and considered manner pinpoint the reasons for the obstacles that have hampered the peace process. We appeal to all parties to that process to redouble their efforts to break the deadlock, because we believe that the responsibility to establish a comprehensive peace and finalize the process is a collective one. This does not mean, however, that the parties to the negotiations bear equal responsibility for the deadlock and the failure to implement the agreements reached.

Based on our commitment to establish that peace and to consolidate the gains achieved so far, and in accordance with the principles of the Israeli-Jordanian peace agreement, today we must engage in honest and frank dialogue with Israel to say that we have no other choice than to pursue the peace process, for that is the only viable solution. Failing that, the region would become caught up once again in a vicious circle of violence, confrontation and extremism, and there are numerous examples to that effect. This is an option we reject.

The security concerns that Israel is emphasizing are real ones. Security is one of the objectives of the peace process, whose implementation would benefit all the countries of the region. But security results from progress towards peace, not from a refusal to implement the agreements signed by Israel and the Palestinians. Security cannot become a reality when practices that are seriously detrimental to the Palestinians, their rights and their aspirations are being carried out with increased intensity. Security cannot be brought about as long as the settlement policies are in force, whether aimed at developing existing settlements or establishing new ones. Peace will not be brought about by confiscating Arab land; by blowing up Arab houses; by confiscating identity cards from the Arab inhabitants of Jerusalem and isolating that city from the rest of the West Bank; by restricting the Palestinian people's freedom of movement, blockading them and detaining them; or by allowing Israeli security forces legally to use force and violence when interrogating suspects, which runs counter to the principles of international law, fundamental human rights and justice.

This is the sort of thing the civilized world has always rejected and condemned. We know how these practices make the Palestinian people feel. This can only make things worse and plunge the region once again into the climate of confrontation, hostility and bitterness we had thought we were leaving behind when we embarked on the road to peace. These practices jeopardize the peace and security of all of the inhabitants of the region and deprive them of stability, and they give rise to uncertainty, concern and mistrust among the countries of the region.

The peace process is based on well-known, clear-cut principles, most importantly the exchange of Arab lands occupied since 1967 for peace. That principle, enshrined in Security Council resolution 242 (1967), affirms the inadmissibility of the acquisition and annexation of territories by force, and forms one of the bases of the peace process and its mandate.

The peace we hope to see is a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. How can there be peace if the land of legitimate property owners is not restored? And how can that land be restored if settlements continue to be built and presented as *faits accomplis*? How can there be peace, and how can the final goal of all parties be reached if Israel officially declares that it will continue its settlements policy and that it still intends to withdraw only from a small number of tiny areas in the West Bank? Israel's declarations have had a very bad effect on the trust we have tried to promote among the countries of the region with a view to furthering the peace process and fostering cooperation, reconciliation, understanding and hope, to putting an end to the hurts and tragedies of the past, and to taking the path towards peace. There can be peace only with the total elimination of the causes of the conflict — not with their perpetuation. There can be peace only through justice — not through the occupation of territories, expansion and the denial of the rights of others. Justice is the basis of peace, and peace must be the framework of security.

The Israeli-Palestinian agreement defers consideration of certain matters, such as the construction of new settlements, the question of Jerusalem, and the question of refugees, until the final stages of the negotiations; the point here is to make it easier to move forward in the peace process. It is only natural that deferred questions should not be the subject of negotiations until the proper time. It is inconceivable that the deferral in consideration of these questions should be put forward as a pretext for altering the situation on the ground to the benefit of the occupier; this complicates matters and makes a solution impossible.

In our view, deferring negotiations on these significant, core issues must not be an excuse for ignoring those issues and for not finding just, acceptable solutions. Anyone who thinks otherwise is wrong, because any unresolved question could give rise to new

tensions and destroy the results already achieved. Only viable solutions can be genuine solutions.

The rights of individuals cannot be neglected in the hope that in time they will be forgotten. All such issues must be on the agenda of the negotiations; there must be a serious and objective attempt to resolve them, and a demonstration of determination to find legitimate, lasting and acceptable solutions that would make peace an acceptable choice for the peoples of the region. This peace must be protected so that it will become the lasting peace we all desire. We consider that this is the path to peace, and that the resolution of deferred questions such as those relating to refugees, to Jerusalem and to the sovereignty of the Palestinian people with a State on its own territory, with Jerusalem as its capital, is the sole guarantee of security, stability, progress and prosperity for all the peoples of the region, Arabs and Israelis alike.

A comprehensive solution requires the resumption of the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations at the point where they broke off, with a view to achieving the equality which we desire and which is necessary. The negotiations must be based on the legitimacy reflected in the Madrid Conference, on the formula of land for peace, and on Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). Progress towards peace and the achievement of peace constitute the sole guarantee that there will be an end to extremism and violence and that security will take deep root in the region.

The question of Jerusalem is at the core of the issue of peace. A balanced and just solution is required. It has been recognized in all international legal and political forums that East Jerusalem is an organic part of the West Bank occupied since 1967 and that the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, applies there, as do the relevant Security Council resolutions. The Security Council has devoted particular attention to Jerusalem since the beginning of the Israeli occupation. On this matter it has adopted resolution 252 (1968), which considered as invalid all Israeli measures which tend to change the legal status of the Holy City; the Council has also rejected all attempts to change the demographic and geographic nature of the city.

Security Council resolution 476 (1980) calls for an end to Israeli occupation of all Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and Security Council resolution 478 (1980) calls upon countries not to transfer their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem. That resolution is a striking example of international determination to reject Israel's annexation of the city. That annexation contravenes the fundamental principles of international law. Jerusalem is occupied territory to which legitimate international resolutions are applicable, in particular the resolutions of the Security Council.

As I have noted, the discussion of the question of Jerusalem is deferred under the Israeli-Palestinian agreement to the final phase of the negotiations, given the importance and sensitivity of that question. That is why any Israeli measure aimed at compromising the Madrid process or at changing the legal, political or demographic status of Jerusalem must be viewed as an attempt to create a new reality and a *fait accompli* and impose them on the Arab side when the negotiations reach their final stage. That would prejudge the status of the Holy City before the final phase of negotiations had taken place. This would be unacceptable and would not further the cause of peace. Nor would it improve the well-being or help realize the aspirations of the peoples of the region to a better future marked by stability, cooperation and mutual respect.

Let me stress with respect to the deferral of the question of Jerusalem that pending the results of the final phase of negotiations, Israel must maintain the status quo in the city, must not isolate the remainder of the West Bank, and must refrain from confiscating the identity papers of life-long residents and from closing the borders to other inhabitants of the occupied region who come to the city for prayer, education, medical care, and business, and to visit their families and loved ones.

For all those reasons, and with a view to preserving the religious, cultural and historical character of Jerusalem, the Government of Jordan continues to maintain, restore and protect the Holy Places, now under the yoke of occupation, and to provide the necessary support for the relevant officials, with a view to protecting those places from all dangers pending the final solution to which we look forward. Jerusalem is the spiritual capital of three revealed religions; we want it to be a noble symbol of peace and peaceful coexistence. The fact that the settlers no longer hold sway in Arab part of Jerusalem does not mean that the city should ever again be divided, or that new walls and ramparts should be built; it means rather that justice has been done.

The international community must shoulder its weighty and fundamental responsibility to give fresh impetus to the peace process so that it may reach a successful and lasting conclusion. It is only the people

who can lay the solid foundations of peace, but they must not be content with thinking of peace as an abstract idea; they expect concrete dividends and results. My country hopes that the international community will come to a better understanding of the economic, financial and development needs of the States of the region and of the region as a whole, as well as of the need to establish and safeguard peace in the Middle East. That is why we attach importance to all the economic summit conferences that promote the implementation and strengthening of plans for the economic development of the region, such as the Casablanca conference, the Amman conference, the Cairo conference and the recent Doha conference. We are encouraged and pleased by the progress achieved thanks to those conferences, but have noted that the stagnation of the peace process has had its repercussions on the most recent events. Many countries that participate in the conferences have noted the need to link economic and political progress in order to guarantee the success of the economic and development process parallel with the peace process.

We believe too that the United Nations, which represents international legitimacy, should play a vital role in giving fresh impetus to the peace process and in strengthening the efforts of the two co-sponsors. We believe that it would be useful for the European Union too play a strengthened role in consolidating the efforts of the co-sponsors and that it should mobilize good offices in all areas to support the peace process and improve the conditions for success. This is particularly true since the European Union has contributed to the peace process from the very outset and continues to help bolster the parallel economic development of the region.

The President took the Chair.

Mr. Jayanama (Thailand): As in other regions, there are conflicts between nations in the Middle East, especially those that share borders. Since its earliest days the United Nations has been concerned with the various conflicts in the Middle East. It is, however, undeniable that the core of the situation in the Middle East is the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Since 1947 various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict have been dealt with by the United Nations. The 1991 Madrid accords led the international community to believe that peace would prevail in the Middle East, that Israel would withdraw its troops from the occupied territories in Syria and Lebanon, that the Palestinian people would be able to exercise its right to self-determination and that the question of Jerusalem would be resolved. However, Thailand regrets that recent setbacks have impeded progress in the Middle East peace process. We strongly believe that the only way to achieve a comprehensive, just and durable peace in the Middle East is through the peace process.

It is Thailand's firm belief that the peace process cannot be accomplished by any one side alone. Peace cannot be achieved by unilateral commitments to agreed obligations; rather, all parties have to honour their commitments. Thailand has always supported the Middle East peace process and hopes that all parties concerned will exercise restraint and flexibility in order to put the derailed process back on track and that peaceful negotiations will help overcome the current stalemate. We commend the efforts being undertaken by various parties to help bring this about. To attain peaceful negotiations, all sides must make efforts to remove obstructions and obstacles, and they must implement all the agreements reached as soon and as thoroughly as possible. Moreover, terrorism and acts of violence in any form or manifestation, which normally victimize civilian populations in general, must cease.

As we all know, at the core of the Middle East problem is the issue of Palestine. Since the Madrid accords in 1991, the signing in 1993 of the Declaration of Principles and the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which provided new hope for a peaceful solution to the situation in the Middle East, the Middle East peace process has experienced its ups and downs. However, on 17 January 1997, this process gained new momentum with the signing of the Hebron agreement.

Despite this positive development, the General Assembly this year convened three times to consider the serious situation in the occupied Arab territories, particularly the situation in Jerusalem. At its resumed session in March this year, the Assembly, considering the situation in Jerusalem, adopted resolution 51/223, which called on Israel, *inter alia*, to refrain from all actions or measures, including settlement activities, which could alter the facts on the ground and pre-empt the final status negotiations.

Although the General Assembly, acting under its resolution 377 (V), entitled "Uniting for peace", adopted resolutions ES-10/2 and ES-10/3, the situation in Palestine today is still volatile. According to the Secretary-General's report pursuant to Assembly resolution ES-10/2, adopted in April this year and contained in document A/ES-10/6, the Jebel Abu Ghneim

incident is viewed as particularly serious — politically, geographically, demographically and economically. My delegation would also like to express its concern over the findings of the report with regard to the effects on the Middle East peace process. The refusal of a party to the process

> "to abandon construction of a new settlement at Jebel Abu Ghneim appears to represent ... the largest single negative factor in the breakdown of the peace process and the fomenting of unrest in the occupied territories." [A/ES-10/6, para. 15 (e)]

The report also states,

> "A number of further activities deemed to be in violation of international law continued to raise tensions and to jeopardize both the peace process and the rights of Palestinians in the occupied territories." [ibid., para. 23]

My delegation would therefore like to register its concern that the aforementioned activities could further complicate the already difficult negotiations, because the final status of Jerusalem is still subject to the outcome of negotiations between the two parties.

It is regrettable to note that every year, for a very long period of time, the United Nations has consistently discussed the agenda item on the situation in the Middle East. Today we are still discussing this issue, after having adopted many relevant resolutions by overwhelming majority.

The delegation of Thailand would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm its full support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and for the Middle East peace process, as well as its commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

It is my delegation's sincere hope that all sides in the conflict will see the benefit of peace and that the Middle East peace process will soon produce a negotiated give-and-take solution acceptable to all.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker, I would like to read out what is written on one of the pages in my file:

> "I must appeal to representatives to be good enough to keep silent in the General Assembly Hall in order to maintain the dignity of the Assembly and out of courtesy to the speaker."

Believe me, I am now watching the General Assembly Hall, and there is a lot of movement here. Unfortunately, those representatives who are standing do not even hear me. Therefore, I am appealing to discipline. It is impossible to work. We have before us a very complicated and very important issue, and there is so much noise. There is no Iron Curtain now, but there is a glass curtain here. You can conduct your consultations behind the glass curtain.

I would be very grateful to all delegations for observing standards of conduct in the General Assembly Hall. It is really very difficult for the speaker to deliver his address.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): My delegation associates itself with the statement of the European Union. However, in view of the special significance we attach to the Middle East situation, I would like to make a few additional comments and observations.

Let me say at the outset that Cyprus's long and rich history has always been heavily influenced by developments in the Middle East. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia, my country has throughout the centuries been a bridge between the peoples of the Middle East and Europe.

In seeking to maintain and strengthen our ties with the European Union, with which we expect to start accession negotiations as early as next April, the promotion of our relations with all our neighbours in the Middle East also remains a significant pillar of our foreign policy.

The recent alarming developments in the Middle East have shown the precarious nature of the peace process and highlighted the imperative need to redouble the efforts for the survival and ultimately successful outcome of the process upon which millions of people, both in the region and internationally, have pinned great hopes.

My Government supports all the initiatives and efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem. We reaffirm our support for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242

(1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which provide the framework for a viable peace in the Middle East. At the same time, we recognize the right of all States to exist in peace with their neighbours within safe and internationally recognized borders. We denounce, in the strongest terms, terrorism and violence against innocent civilians.

On the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Glafcos Clerides, reaffirmed our friendship with the Palestinian people and our support for the efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive settlement, bringing lasting peace and security in the Middle East.

Following the present stalemate with deep concern, we are convinced of the need for the peace process to be injected with new spirit and momentum to move it out of its present difficulties. The Government of Cyprus remains committed to playing its modest part in a practical way in the enhancement of the peace process. In this regard, we express our belief that in order to have stability, the agreements between the parties should be faithfully implemented. There is no other way for stability in that sensitive region to be achieved than by than a peaceful solution through negotiation, reconciliation, trust and cooperation.

For this to happen, it is essential to avoid measures which place obstacles in the way of the implementation of the peace process, including the closure of Palestinian territories and the building of settlements, which make it more difficult to move the peace process forward. At the same time, the economic advancement of the Palestinian people remains a determining factor for stability and ultimate rapprochement in the Middle East. For this reason, the Government of Cyprus has prepared a special programme of economic assistance to the Palestinian people, which is currently being implemented. The programme includes training for about a hundred Palestinian officials in Cyprus, follow-up visits by Cypriot experts and the building of two medical centres.

While we consider the Palestinian problem to be the core issue of the Middle East conflict, we support the resumption of the negotiations between Israel and Syria and the opening of talks between Israel and Lebanon. A fundamental element of our position in the Middle East, and indeed in all situations of occupation and invasion, is the withdrawal of foreign forces from the occupied territories.

The prospect of a peaceful and prosperous Middle East is cherished by all. It can be secured not by unilateral actions, violence or military build-up, but by a common vision of a better future through economic progress, stability and social justice. It is the hope of my Government, my country and my countrymen that this vision will not be lost.

Mr. Richardson (United States of America): This has not been an easy year for the peace process in the Middle East. There have been incidents of terrorism and outbreaks of violence. There have been misunderstandings and periods of doubt. Progress has been slow. Extremist factions would like to believe that the momentum towards peace has stalled. We cannot accept that. The past is too filled with suffering; the opportunity for true reconciliation has been too long in coming; and the logic of peace remains too compelling to slide backwards now. Despite the hard challenges they face, the parties to the Madrid process have clearly stated their commitment to moving forward. The General Assembly should honour this effort and endorse this commitment.

Each year a number of resolutions adopted here serve only to thwart the peace process. They do not recognize the progress that has been made so far. Such resolutions have the effect of criticizing the negotiating stances or tactics of the parties, fixing blame for incidents that have complicated the process in recent months, or placing the onus on one party to make concessions. We believe such elements undermine the basic purpose of the role of the United Nations in achieving peace in the region. A just, lasting peace can happen only through direct negotiations in the region between the parties concerned. It will not be imposed from New York, although progress can certainly be hindered from here. Negative resolutions distract the parties from their work, and contribute to an atmosphere of ill will and mistrust that only makes the task ahead harder.

As we speak, Palestinians and Israelis remain hard at work negotiating the next important steps in their mutual search for peace. To reinvigorate the possibility of a helpful United Nations role in the peace process, we continue to believe, there should be a positive resolution to serve to note the progress made by the parties to date, encourage them to continue efforts to reach a just and lasting solution to the problems that divide them and express the strong United Nations support for that process. I would like to take this opportunity to express our hope that Lebanon, Israel and Syria will also achieve

progress in negotiations. In this regard, I would like to reaffirm my Government's commitment to Lebanon's political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Those objectives were stated in Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which my Government supports.

In conclusion, the path to peace is a dynamic process. I entreat all delegations here to work constructively, to encourage and contribute to the momentum of the process, so that a just, comprehensive and lasting peace can be achieved.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): Exactly a year has passed since the adoption by the General Assembly of the last "positive resolution" on the Middle East peace process. With few exceptions, it has not been a good year for the peace process. The work of the General Assembly has reflected increasing frustration on both sides, as well as among the international community, at the lack of progress in the negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and delays in the implementation of the Oslo agreements.

There are a number of reasons for this unfortunate development. It is clear that the parties themselves share the responsibility for progress and for setbacks in the peace process. The international community nonetheless has the right to express its opinion on the issues at stake. It has been doing so repeatedly for the last 50 years, since the passing of the General Assembly partition resolution, resolution 181 (II), in 1947. This year the General Assembly has been particularly vocal about the setbacks in the peace process, not least during the emergency special session.

Over the past year we have seen repeated use of violence and terrorism by extremist minorities. I am sorry to say that 1997 has been quite a successful one for destructive forces in the Middle East — for the enemies of peace. Regrettably, we have also seen unilateral actions, designed to pre-empt the final status negotiations.

We have, however, also seen progress in the peace process, something which the General Assembly must strongly support. The Hebron Protocol, which was signed and implemented in January, proves the ability of the parties to push the peace process forward and honour their own commitments. In recent weeks we have seen a resumption of negotiations on outstanding issues in the Interim Agreement. The United Nations must not only applaud but also actively encourage such progress.

Against this background, we believe that the General Assembly should reconfirm its constructive approach to the peace process, reconfirm its wholehearted support for the peace process, reconfirm the validity of the Oslo Agreements and, first and foremost, reconfirm that its supreme aim is to assist the parties in their quest for peace. This the General Assembly has done every year since 1993, and we sincerely hope that it will be possible to do it again this year.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My country's delegation would like to express its deep regret at the fact that this important opportunity to discuss agenda item 37 has turned into polemics which are intended to hide the facts and to obfuscate the grave responsibility of the Israeli leadership under its Prime Minister for the sorry state of affairs with regard to the Middle East peace process. It is unacceptable — in fact, impossible — to go on deceiving ourselves and international public opinion.

The peace process is not in good shape, and the sponsors of the draft resolution on this question have failed to refer to that. The peace process is in crisis, and affairs in the Middle East are becoming more complicated. Arab Governments are exercising great restraint to prevent the situation from exploding. We must recognize the reality and frankly refer to the party responsible for the situation. Silence, evasion and prevarication, which are presently practised, will not bring the Prime Minister of Israel to his senses but only add to his intransigence, self-assuredness and rigidity.

The two sponsors of the peace process bear the basic responsibility for deterring the Israeli policies that are destroying the peace process. We have a rare opportunity, one that may not be repeated, to reach a just, comprehensive and durable solution to the problem of the Middle East. We should not allow the Prime Minister of Israel to impede the attainment of this historic achievement. Silence, evasiveness and disregard of the facts will not serve peace, the credibility of the sponsors of the peace process or the credibility of the international Organization, which has for many years applauded their efforts aimed at laying down the bases of peace, and the launching of the train of negotiations towards that objective.

Any attempt to persuade the General Assembly to adopt a draft resolution that makes no reference to the latest developments or ignores the basic principles agreed upon in the peace process, especially the notion of land

for peace and the necessity of implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), would represent a great setback to the genuine hopes generated by our leaders and accepted by our peoples at the outset of the peace process.

What can we say to our peoples? What pretexts can the sponsors of peace employ? As for the international community, what can be said about it when it attempts to force implementation of some of its resolutions on certain countries in our region and turns a blind eye to the fact that Israel has never implemented tens of these resolutions adopted by the international community over many long years, including resolutions unanimously adopted by the Security Council? How long will such a double standard continue to prevail in addressing the problems of the world? How long will Israel remain above the law and above international legality?

This year the United Nations has witnessed many Security Council meetings convened to discuss the Israeli violations of international law and its confiscation of Arab lands in the areas it has occupied by force and by coercion since 1967 in order to establish settlements on them. The Security Council agreed on a resolution asking the Israeli Government to reverse such steps, but the Israeli Government did not comply.

The emergency special session has resumed on two occasions, and on each occasion the General Assembly has adopted two resolutions by an overwhelming majority, again demanding that Israel cease its colonial policies. What was the result? The Government of Israel rejected those resolutions constantly, with scorn and intransigence. Instead of our draft resolution warning against the consequences of continuation of the colonial policy and clearly and without ambiguity, with the unanimity of the international community, calling upon the Israeli leaders to cease that policy, we have a draft resolution blessing the artificial smiles, hollow words and misleading plans of the Israeli leaders. We even hear some describing the lands on which Israel is building its settlements as "lands in dispute", notwithstanding the fact that those lands were occupied by Israel by force in the 1967 war. Such a draft resolution and such statements have encouraged the Israeli leaders to continue their colonial policy, and caused the situation to worsen more and more. Acts of violence have increased, and tens of people have been killed or injured.

If we are addressing the conscience of the international community represented here in the General Assembly of the United Nations, it is because we continue to believe in international legality and in the norms of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. We call upon every Member here in the General Assembly to support us so that, together, we can build a true, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The security tension in that sensitive area of the world threatens international peace and security. Condoning Israel's non-implementation of United Nations resolutions is a threat to the entire regime of international law and international legality. Non-observance of the norms of international law in solving the Middle East problem will pave the way to the collapse of the regime of international law in all other parts of the world. Mutual support for the imposition of international legality would help to ease tensions and buttress the principles of justice and law.

Israel should not continue its occupation of Arab land, expelling the inhabitants and confiscating some of the land in order to allow more immigrants to settle on it. Millions of Palestinian refugees who were expelled by Israel from their homes should not be deprived of their right to return to their homes, in implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III). How long will Israel remain intransigent and arrogant, employing all kinds of weapons, including weapons banned by the international community, in order to maintain its occupation of Arab lands? In southern Lebanon, scenes of violence, destruction, random bombings, killing, and mass injuries are nearly daily occurrences. This scene is the consequence of Israel's continued occupation of parts of southern Lebanon, notwithstanding Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Israel wishes to impose on us by fire and steel political solutions that we have rejected in the past and that we will continually reject in the future. We have said that the only solution is for Israel to withdraw from our occupied land, in accordance with resolution 425 (1978). Israel must also withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines that existed on 4 June 1967, and must resume negotiations from the point at which they stopped.

Arab leaders have repeatedly emphasized that Israel's commitment to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) would pave the way for a durable and just peace in the area. But we want a durable, comprehensive and just peace based on the principles of international law and the resolutions of international legality.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that there is a general agreement to postpone to Tuesday, 9 December, the introduction of and action on all the draft resolutions and amendments submitted under agenda item 36, "Question of Palestine", and under agenda item 37, "The situation in the Middle East". The time of the meeting will be announced in the *Journal*.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today the General Assembly heard a misleading statement by the representative of the Israeli regime on the situation in the Middle East. The statement, portrayed as an analytical discussion of the critical situation in that part of the world, was drafted and delivered to distort the existing bitter realities in the Middle East and the alarming status quo created solely as a result of the unlawful policies and infamous practices of the Israeli regime in that volatile region.

In that statement baseless and unsubstantiated allegations were made against some regional States, including my country, to divert the attention of the international community from the illegal policies and inhuman actions of Israel, such as the continued occupation of the territories of others, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, southern Lebanon and the Syrian Golan.

The failed Israeli attack against southern Lebanon in early September this year and the recent assassination attempt against certain individuals by Israeli agents in Jordan are chilling manifestations of Israeli State terrorism.

We would like to reiterate our position that our support for the Lebanese people is of a humanitarian and moral nature. Those who are fighting the foreign occupation in the region are in fact exercising their legitimate rights, recognized by international law, and they can by no means be labelled terrorists. Thus the people of southern Lebanon are entitled to struggle to liberate their homeland from Israeli occupation.

The misleading statement to the Assembly today was a futile effort to sow discord among countries in the region. I should like to emphasize that the Islamic Republic of Iran enjoys good relations with other Islamic countries and endeavours to promote brotherly relations with all neighbouring and Islamic countries. As everyone knows, the Islamic Republic of Iran is hosting the Eighth Islamic Summit in Tehran, which is clear proof of its position in the Islamic world and its intention to promote those brotherly and friendly relations.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic wishes to exercise its right of reply to respond to the misleading statements and lies of the Israeli representative this morning before this body. Although we are aware that representatives know the historical facts of the situation in the Middle East and its development, we should like to emphasize the following.

First, Israel was the party to initiate aggression, with aggression against Syrian farms and villages and cities in the period from 1948 until its occupation of the Syrian Golan in 1967. This was with the objective of ejecting Syrian farmers from their land and preventing them from reaping their harvests. The authenticity of what we say is documented in reports by truce monitors during the period referred to, which confirm that the Israeli army did initiate these attacks. These reports are available in the archives of the United Nations for whoever wishes to refer to them. Memoranda published by high United Nations officials charged with monitoring the armistice agreements between Syria and Israel at the time also prove our position.

Secondly, the Israeli representative claimed that the Golan is important for Israel's security. This is the very language used by Israel to annex the Syrian Golan in 1981. It is the very language used by the current head of the Israeli Government to hold on to the occupied Syrian territory. Syria will not, under any pretext, cede even one particle of the soil of its land. Such claims also contradict all the bases on which the peace process begun in Madrid in 1991, was built. The principle there was land for peace and respect for international legitimacy, the Charter of the United Nations, which rejects the acquisition by force of land belonging to others, and United Nations resolutions, particularly, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We wonder

whether any sane person in the world can expect Syria to contract peace with the Israeli Government while Syrian land is in Israeli hands.

At this point I should like to recall the guarantees given by the United States of America to Syria that it would not accept the annexation of one inch of the Syrian Golan occupied in 1967.

Thirdly, the representative of Israel spoke in a rather jocular manner on the issue of armaments in the Middle East. It seems that he imagined himself speaking in Disneyland and not in the General Assembly of the United Nations. Every nation of the world, big or small, knows that Israel has been qualitatively and quantitatively militarily superior to all the Arab armies since 1948.

Suffice it to refer to the fact that Israel possesses dozens of nuclear warheads and all kinds of other weapons of mass destruction, locally produced. This is in addition to all it receives from the most sophisticated weapons factories in other countries, which provide it with the most modern tanks, aircraft and guns.

Fourthly, Israel has rejected the resumption of talks on the Syrian track from the point where talks stopped. Israel conditions a return to the negotiating table on returning to square one. So Israel is the one conditioning the resumption of negotiations while, at the same time, practising a rather blind demagogy in front of international public opinion, to deceive it into believing that it is Syria that refuses to resume negotiations.

Fifthly, daily declarations and statements made by the Israeli Prime Minister on keeping the Arab occupied territories and on building more settlements and other projects in the occupied Syrian Golan all prove the falsity of these hollow statements whereby the Israeli representative tries in vain to dress up the image of his leadership. This is in addition to his attempts aimed at misleading world public opinion.

Syria opened the door to the holding of the Madrid Peace Conference when it responded to the United States initiative on the peace process. Syria is prepared to resume the peace process when Israel takes the initiative in setting aside its conditions, particularly that of returning to square one before resuming the peace negotiations. Syria renews its commitment to peace on the bases on which the peace process was begun, and not on other bases or formulae which are aimed only at satisfying Israel's false pride and consolidating its hegemony and occupation, without bringing about what the peoples of the region are aspiring to in terms of dignity, security and stability.

Mr. Gold (Israel): There is a myth being advanced in this Chamber by certain speakers: that the peace process over the last three to four years was in an idyllic state until the May 1996 elections that brought the current Israeli Government to power. Those speakers have forgotten that hundreds of Katyusha rockets fell on Israel in the Galilee, launched from areas in Lebanon under Syrian military control. They have forgotten men, women and children who were forced to live in bomb shelters repeatedly in northern Israel. They have forgotten about the population of Kiryat Shmona, many of whom had to abandon their homes while the Katyusha rockets came into the centre of town. They have also forgotten, when they speak, about repeated deliveries by Iranian aircraft of weapons and of armaments for Hezbollah that are supplied through Damascus International Airport and then transshipped to Eastern Lebanon for use against Israel.

Those who recall this idyllic state of the peace process also forget the repeated bus bombings that have occurred in the centre of practically every Israeli city while we have been negotiating. The main challenge we have been facing is the fact that the threats, the bombings and the missile attacks hitting Israel are coming from areas under the military control of our negotiating partners.

Now Israel has decided not to choose the course of despair. But Israel has chosen, nonetheless, to proceed forward in the peace process, and it is this Government of Israel that, immediately after its election, sat with representatives of Lebanon and Syria and completed a protocol on the establishment of a monitoring group in southern Lebanon, where Lebanese Syrian officers sit with Israeli officers, as well as with French and American officials, and discuss the problems of security in southern Lebanon. It is this Government that, despite the repeated bus bombings and repeated threats to innocent Israelis, sat with representatives of the Palestinian Authority and negotiated and signed the Hebron Protocol and then implemented that Protocol and redeployed from the town of Hebron.

It was this Government that charted a course for 1997, a road map for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority called the Note for the Record. It is this Government that has tried to take an impaired peace process and make it work. We call on the Governments, the Missions represented here in the

General Assembly, to help us with this task by taking positive positions on the draft resolutions that are being put before them. But please do not make an already difficult process, which we have inherited, any more difficult than it was when we came into power.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): We have heard the representative of the occupying Power in southern Lebanon denounce the guns of those who are resisting the occupation of their land, a part of their country, calling them terrorists. Why? Because they refuse to be cowed by the oppression of Israeli occupation forces; because they insist on their freedom and on liberating the soil of their country from this shameful defilement thereof. Does this person, wearing the gloves of death believe that he could deceive the Assembly? Does he think that the world does not see how he, through his possession of weapons of mass destruction and means of annihilation, commits daily acts of aggression against the sanctity of our land, of our independence, of our sovereignty? Can he continue to flout with arrogance and vanity the repeated resolutions of the United Nations — resolutions of international legitimacy? What kind of history will we record for our children to read one day? The history of a Member of this international Organization that thumbs its nose at this international Organization, at the United Nations forces, the resolutions of the Security Council, at the resolutions of the General Assembly, at the resolutions of the human rights commissions, and places itself above the law and makes of its edict the rule of law and of international legitimacy? By what norm of international law can those resisting the occupation of their own land by oppressive foreign forces be labelled terrorists? Is occupation by force not terrorism incarnate? How long can he continue to believe that he is convincing the Assembly that attacking his forces which occupy our land is terrorism, while his bombardment of civilian homes, schools, hospitals and of public facilities is a legitimate act of self-defence? What law allows the Israeli occupier to speak in such a tone?

As we stand at the threshold of the twenty-first century, it is shameful to accept such Israeli logic in this edifice, where all the peoples of the world have placed their hopes in international peace, security and stability.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.